

REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed April 7, 2005. .
Claims 11-26 and 33-35 are canceled without prejudice to filing a divisional application as being drawn to an unelected invention. Claims 1, 2, 5, and 27 are amended. New claims 36-39 are presented. The amendments and new claims are supported by the present application and do not add new matter. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-10, 27-32 and 36-39 are pending.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 5 and 6 were rejected as being indefinite for providing insufficient antecedent basis for the limitation "means for receiving the individual object." The amendment to claims 2 and 5 corrects this noted deficiency. The rejections should be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-10 and 27-32 were rejected as being obvious over Green, Jr. et al. (US 4,862,905) in view of Schubert (US 3,834,285). Applicants submit the above amendments overcome this rejection.

Independent Claim 1 has been amended to recite "said horizontal pan including means to deliver said object from a radially inward portion of the pan to a radially outward peripheral portion of the pan proximate the object seat at the

upper end of the stem." The rejection relies on Schubert et al for teaching a rotatable pan with stems. However, Schubert et al fails to disclose a pan including means to deliver the object from a radially inward portion of the pan to a radially outward peripheral portion of the pan proximate the stems.

Independent Claim 27 has been amended to recite "continuously supplying individual objects by supporting a plurality of objects on a horizontal pan, said horizontal pan being substantially perpendicular to an axis of rotation of the pan." The rejection relies on Schubert et al for teaching a rotatable pan with stems. However, Schubert et al fails to disclose a pan including supporting a plurality of objects on a horizontal pan where the pan is substantially perpendicular to the axis of rotation of the pan.

Applicants submit that rather than teaching supporting objects on a horizontal pan perpendicular to the pan's axis of rotation or teaching a pan with means to deliver objects from the inward portion to the peripheral portion, Schubert teaches supporting objects (11) on the peripheral face of a rotating drum referred to as the "assembly conveyor" (1). Schubert discloses that the peripheral face is parallel to the axis of rotation of the drum. Schubert teaches means referred to as "tube feeding unit" (7) to deliver the objects (11) from an external supply source to position "a" on the peripheral surface of the assembly conveyor (1) (see Figs. 1 and 5), where the object (i.e. tube) is assembled into a finished filter rod. The assembled filter rods are then removed from position "s" on the peripheral surface of the assembly conveyor with a "take off conveyor

(23). (See Fig. 1). During assembly, Schubert teaches using stems (119) to slide the filter rod components up or down along the peripheral surface of the assembly conveyor to assemble the components. Nowhere does Schubert teach that the pan supports the objects on a surface perpendicular to the pan's axis of rotation, or that the pan includes means to deliver the objects from its center to its periphery. Further, there is no suggestion to modify Schubert to obtain these features. Accordingly, independent claims 1 and 27 are not obvious over the combination of Green, Jr. and Schubert. Therefore, the rejection against independent claims 1 and 27 and its dependent claims 2-10 and 28-32, respectively, should be withdrawn.

In addition, claims 5, 6, 8, 30 and 31 include limitations that are not taught or suggested by the combination of Green, Jr. and Schubert. The Office Action fails to identify evidence that these limitations are suggested by these references, or that one of skill in the art would have been motivated to modify these references to obtain these limitations, and therefore, fails to make out a prima facie case of obviousness. Accordingly, the rejections for claims 5, 6, 8, 30 and 31 should withdrawn for this additional reason.

New claims 36-39 are presented. These claims include additional limitations that are not taught or suggested by Green, Jr., Schubert et al. or the combination of these two references.

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Conclusion

Based on the above amendments and remarks, applicants submit that the claims are in condition for allowance. The examiner is kindly invited to contact the undersigned attorney to expedite allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc V. Richards', written over a horizontal line.

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